

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicants: N. William Parker et al.

Docket No.: 58884-0305280
(MBS-0006US)

Serial No.: Continuation of 09/789,180

Group Art Unit:

Filing Date: July 28, 2003

Examiner:

For: **MULTI-BEAM MULTI-COLUMN ELECTRON BEAM INSPECTION
SYSTEM**

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Commissioner for Patents
P. O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Dear Sir:

Please enter this amendment prior to examination of the enclosed continuation application:

AMENDMENT

IN THE CLAIMS

Cancel claims 1-13 as filed in the parent application.

Add the following new claims:

- 1 14. (New) An electron optical column comprising:
2 means for generating an electron beam;
3 a voltage contrast plate with a plate aperture, the edge of which is beveled at an angle so
4 as to produce an electric field free region below said aperture on the surface of a specimen
5 substrate situated immediately below said voltage contrast plate; and
6 an annular secondary electron detector centered on the optic axis of said column and
7 positioned above said voltage contrast plate.
- 1 15. (New) An electron optical column as in claim 1, further comprising a focus lens situated
2 between said detector and said voltage contrast plate.